

he invariably put the most favorable interpretation upon their silence, the tone of his correspondence betrays an anxiety which he could not conceal. He regarded this period of suspense as most critical for the future policy and even for the existence of his party; and this was the belief of most of the Republican members of Congress.

Early in March, the long-expected dispatches reached the President, and on the 5th he laid one of these before Congress, with the announcement that others in cipher were in his possession. On the 10th he communicated enough of these to reveal their tenor and to arouse the passions of the war party. At the same time he proposed war preparations of an offensive as well as defensive character. The Senate requested the cipher dispatches in full, and the President willingly complied. Their contents were of a most inflammatory character. The envoys had not secured a single interview with Talleyrand, the Directory's Minister for foreign affairs. This wily statesman had continued to excuse himself on one plea or another, and had sent his special agents, Hottingeur, Bellamy, and Hauteval, to meet the American legation in his stead. The dispatches omitted the names of Talleyrand's agents and substituted the letters X. Y. Z.—a circumstance that gave the transaction the name of "the X. Y. Z. affair." These go-betweens repeatedly suggested to the envoys to propose to Talleyrand the loan of a large sum of money by the United States, and the envoys made the mistake of listening to the suggestions. But they went no further. They steadily refused to make any answer until French captures of American vessels should cease. The caution of both sides prevented any agreement from being reached, and after months of futile negotiations the American envoys finally did what they should have done when the first ambiguous overture was made to them. They broke off all negotiations, and re-

